

HB1068: Environment – Environmental Health Specialists and On–Site Sewage Disposal Systems – Transfer of Responsibilities and Standards, Regulations, Applications, and Plans

House Environment and Transportation Committee

March 2, 2022

Position: Favorable with Amendments

Dear Chairman Barve and Members of the Committee,

Clean Water Action, ShoreRivers, and the Chesapeake Bay Foundation support HB1068 to amend some of the processes around septic permitting in the state. We appreciate the work that Senator Hester and Delegate Stein have put into the bill to address many of our original concerns. HB1068 includes many of the amendments that we worked on in SB113.

As amended, SB113 (and HB1068) create an online tracking system for the status of septic system permit applications. Our understanding is that one of the problems that applicants are having with permitting septic systems is that once the permitting process has initiated, it is a black box of information - they may or may not know where the system is in the process, creating uncertainty.

We enthusiastically support the concept of a database to track septic permits as they make their way through the process and think this could be a good building block for ultimately having a more uniform and user friendly database for septic systems.

Current septic records vary widely across counties, as some have moved to digital records while others are still on paper. Many other states have statewide, uniform septic databases which would be good models for Maryland. For example, [Florida has a replicable database that should be explored](#).

If the Maryland Department of the Environment is creating a new, online tracking system, then we would want it to be useful outside tracking permitting, and to endure so the state and counties have database of where septic systems exist in the state - enabling targeted education and a more complete understanding of where septic systems are in the state. To this end, we suggest that the legislation establish a workgroup to determine the scope of this new database.

Amendment: **CREATE A WORKGROUP CONSISTING OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONALS, ON-SITE WASTEWATER PROFESSIONALS, MEMBERS OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL COMMUNITY, AND THE MARYLAND DEPARTMENTS OF HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENT TO DETERMINE THE SCOPE OF THE DATABASE.**

We appreciate Senator Hester and Delegate Stein working with us and our concerns and support HB1068 as it finds a path forward for a database and adds \$5 million for more staffing. We appreciate the opportunity to work further to improve the management of septic systems moving forward and urge a favorable report with this amendment on HB1068.

Thank you,

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